

Message Text

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1. I MET, AS SCHEDULED, WITH PEREDA IN HIS SUBURBAN HOME AND EMPHASIZED THE INFORMALITY OF THIS CONTACT. PEREDA SPOKE IN A VERY LOW VOICE AND WAS UNCHARACTERISTICALLY VERY NERVOUS THROUGHOUT OUR CONVERSATION. AT VARIOUS POINTS IN THE CONVERSATION HE INDICATED DEEP PREOCCUPATION WITH RECENT VIOLENCE IN THE YUNGAS REGION (IN WHICH ARMED CAMPESINOS HAVE ATTACKED SOLDIERS AND POLICE) AND WITH HIS OWN PROBLEM OF MAINTAINING SUPPORT FROM THE MILITARY. HE WAS CLEARLY A WORRIED MAN OPERATING IN A VERY FRAGILE SITUATION.

2. DURING THE COURSE OF THE CONVERSATION PEREDA CONFIRMED ALL THE MAJOR ELEMENTS OF THE DEMOCRATIZATION PLAN PREVIOUSLY DESCRIBED TO ME BY TAPIA (REFTEL B); HE SPECIFICALLY SAID HE WOULD NOT BE A CANDIDATE IN THE NEXT ELECTIONS. THE ONE DIFFERENCE I SENSED WAS THAT HE TALKED ABOUT QTE INVITING UNQTE THE POLITICAL PARTIES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OR COURT THAT WOULD PREPARE THE ELECTIONS. WHEN I QUESTIONED THIS, PEREDA SAID HE COULD NOT ASSURE THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PARTIES, HE COULD ONLY CREATE THE OPPORTUNITY. I RESPONDED THAT A CRITICAL ELEMENT OF THE PLAN AS FAR AS WE WERE CONCERNED WAS THAT HE OBTAIN THE COOPERATION OF THE MAJOR PARTIES AND POLITICAL ELEMENTS FOR THE PLAN SO THAT IT COULD ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVE OF ASSURING DOMESTIC PEACE. PEREDA SAID THAT THIS WAS HIS INTENT, BUT THAT HE FIRST HAD A BIG JOB IN ASSURING THE EXPLICIT ENDORSEMENT OF THE

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ARMED FORCES FOR HIS PLAN. HE HAS CONVENED A LARGE MEETING OF MILITARY COMMANDERS FOR AUGUST 1. PEREDA SAID THAT ONCE HE HAD OBTAINED THE ENDORSEMENT OF THE ARMED FORCES FOR HIS PLAN HE COULD THEN GO TO THE POLITICAL PARTIES. I ASKED WHETHER HE WOULD STILL BE ABLE TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE PARTIES ONCE HE HAD WORKED OUT A SPECIFIC PLAN WITH THE ARMED FORCES. PEREDA RESPONDED THAT HE WOULD BE ABLE TO NEGOTIATE, BUT ONLY TO A LIMITED EX-

TENT. I HAD THE CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT PEREDA FEELS HE HAS PROBLEMS WITH THE ARMED FORCES AND IS NOT SURE HIS PLAN WILL BE ENDORSED AS PRESENTED. I ALSO UNDERSTOOD HIM TO IMPLY THAT HE NEEDS AN INDEPENDENT MILITARY ENDORSEMENT FOR HIS PLAN, APART FROM WHATEVER HIS SPEECH MIGHT SAY ABOUT MILITARY SUPPORT.

3. I RAISED OUR CONCERN ON THE TIMING OF ELECTIONS. IT APPEARED, I SAID, THAT AN EARLIER ELECTION DATE WOULD BE NEEDED TO GAIN THE CRITICAL, UNIFYING SUPPORT OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES, PAZ WAS SEEKING ELECTIONS IN 12 MONTHS, SILES IN SIX AND PEREDA HIMSELF IN HIS NEW YORK TIMES INTERVIEW HELD OUT THE PROSPECT OF 18 MONTHS. NONE OF THIS SEEMED TO INDICATE THAT AGREEMENT WOULD BE POSSIBLE ON ELECTIONS IN 21 MONTHS AS NOW PROPOSED IN PEREDA'S PLAN. PEREDA SAID THAT WHAT HE MEANT BY THE 18 MONTHS MENTIONED TO THE NEW YORK TIMES WAS EARLY 1980. A FEW MONTHS DIFFERENCE, I.E., ELECTIONS SOMEWHAT EARLIER THAN MAY, WAS NOT IMPORTANT. WHAT WAS IMPORTANT WAS THAT THE ARMED FORCES WOULD NOT TOLERATE ELECTIONS IN 1979. WITHIN THIS CONSTRAINT, HOWEVER, HE THOUGHT HE COULD REACH AGREEMENT WITH VICTOR PAZ AND PROBABLY RENE BERNAL (I.E., NOT HERNAN SILES). I TRIED TO TURN AROUND HE 1979 POINT AND PRESENTED OUR CONCEPT OF 1979 AS A YEAR OF OPPORTUNITY; OUR EFFORT WAS TO DISPEL THE CONCERN ABOUT A YEAR OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT BY MAKING IT A YEAR OF HARMONY AND PROGRESS TOWARD RESOLUTION FOR BOLIVIA'S ASPIRATIONS. I ALSO CITED THE GOB'S ORIGINAL CONCEPT THAT A DEMOCRATIC BOLIVIA WOULD BE IN A
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STRONGER POSITION TO ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVE DURING THE CRITICAL CENTENNIAL YEAR. AFTER SEVERAL TRIES TO ASCEND THIS HILL, I GOT THE CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT 1979 IS NOT SEEN BY PEREDA AS A YEAR OF OPPORTUNITY FOR OUTLET NEGOTIATIONS. HE CLEARLY VIEWED NEGOTIATIONS ON AN OUTLET IN 1979 AS PROBABLY ONE MORE FIGHT THAN HE COULD HANDLE. HE REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES THAT ALL OF 1979 WAS AN ALLERGIC TIME FOR THE BOLIVIAN MILITARY, NOT JUST THE HISTORIC SPRING DATES WHICH I RAISED. I RECAPITULATED OUR TWO MAJOR CONCERNS REGARDING HIS PLAN AS: (1) THAT ELECTIONS BE HELD AT THE EARLIEST POINT FOR WHICH THEY COULD BE ADEQUATELY PREPARED, WHICH COULD BE AS EARLY AS ONE YEAR FROM NOW AND (2) THAT HIS ELABORATION OF THE PLAN INCLUDE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE POLITICAL PARTIES, BUILDING TOWARDS A CONSENSUS BEHIND A PARTICULAR PLAN. PEREDA SAID HE WOULD COMMUNICATE THIS TO THE ARMED FORCES AND SEE WHETHER THEY WOULD GO ALONG WITH SOME SHORTENING OF THE SCHEDULE FOR ELECTIONS.

4. PEREDA SAID HIS SPEECH ON THE DEMOCRATIZATION PLAN WOULD BE GIVEN ON AUGUST 6, REGARDLESS OF U.S. ACTIONS BETWEEN NOW AND THAT DATE. NEVERTHELESS, HE SAID IT WOULD BE VERY IMPORTANT AND VERY HELPFUL IF THE U.S. COULD RECOGNIZE THE

NEW GOVERNMENT BEFORE AUGUST 6. I EXPLAINED TO PEREDA OUR ATTITUDE ON THIS QUESTION PRECISELY AS INDICATED IN PARA 6 OF REFTTEL A. PEREDA SAID HE HAD A SERIOUS IMAGE PROBLEM WHICH COULD BE IMPORTANT FOR THE MILITARY. HE SAID THE PROBLEM WAS NOT SO MUCH AVOIDING THE APPEARANCE OF PREAGREEMENTS BUT OF AVOIDING THE APPEARANCE OF CAVING TO U.S. PRESSURE IN THE FORM OF OUR WITHHOLDING RECOGNITION OR AFFIRMATION OF MAINTENANCE OF RELATIONS, AS WE CALLED IT. THIS MIGHT BE A SMALL POINT FOR US BUT THE IMAGERY WAS TERRIBLY IMPORTANT TO HIM IN MANAGING THE TASK AHEAD. PEREDA ASKED THAT WE RECONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF AFFIRMING MAINTENANCE OF RELATIONS BEFORE AUGUST 6. I TOLD PEREDA I WOULD REPORT HIS REQUEST THAT WE RECONSIDER BUT I COULD, OF COURSE, NOT GIVE HIM ANY INDICATION THAT OUR POSITION WOULD CHANGE. I TOLD PEREDA THAT

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IF HE COULD KEEP ME INFORMED THROUGH TAPIA OF THE RESULTS OF HIS CONSULTATIONS WITH THE MILITARY AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES THIS WOULD FACILITATE OUR OVERALL CONSIDERATION OF OUR POLICY. PEREDA SAID HE WOULD DO THIS.

6. COMMENT: I HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT PEREDA MAY BE IN A WEAKER POSITION THAN EVEN THAT INDICATED IN MY EARLIER ASSESSMENTS. IN THIS FRAGILE SITUATION, IT IS DIFFICULT TO JUDGE HOW FAR HE CAN BE PUSHED BEFORE HE CRACKS. CRACKING COULD TAKE THE FORM OF A QUICK SHIFT TO A REPRESSIVE GOVERNING POLICY OR A MILITARY COUP AGAINST PEREDA. PEREDA WOULD OBVIOUSLY LIKE TO BE PRESIDENT OF BOLIVIA FOR TWO YEARS. BUT HE MAY WELL NOT KNOW WHETHER EARLIER ELECTIONS ARE GOING TO IMPROVE OR WORSEN THE PROBLEM OF A DIVIDED MILITARY WITH WHICH HE HAS TO CONTEND. THE SPECTER OF CAMPESINOS SHOOTING SOLDIERS COULD DRIVE ELEMENTS OF THE MILITARY IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS. THE HARDLINERS WHO PUT PEREDA IN POWER COULD SEE CAMPESINO VIOLENCE AS THE FINAL ARGUMENT FOR REPRESSION. THE DISAFFECTED ARMY OFFICERS WHO DEEPLY RESENT THE AIR FORCE/SANTA CRUZ COUP ON BEHALF OF PEREDA MAY WELL SEE CAMPESINOS SHOOTING SOLDIERS AS THE ULTIMATE PROOF OF THE STUPIDITY OF THE COUP. WE CAN HAVE NO CONFIDENCE WHATSOEVER, HOWEVER, IN THE OBJECTIVES OF A NEW MILITARY COUP; IT COULD BE EARLIER ELECTIONS, IT COULD BE NO ELECTIONS. OUR BEST HOPE TO PRESERVE WHAT WE CAN OF ALL OUR OBJECTIVES IS PROBABLY STILL TO WORK TOWARD IMPROVEMENT OF THE PEREDA PLAN. BUT WE ARE OBVIOUSLY DEALING WITH AN UNSTEADY LEADER IN A VERY FRAGILE SITUATION.

6. TO PEREDA U.S. QTE RECOGNITION UNQTE IS PART OF A THIN DEFENSE AGAINST MILITARY REJECTION OF HIM AS WELL AS HIS PLAN. THIS MAKES OUR RECOGNITION A SHARP, DOUBLE-EDGED WEAPON THAT SHOULD BE USED VERY CAREFULLY. A CASE COULD BE MADE FOR A LOW-KEY AFFIRMATION NOW SO THAT THIS U.S. ACTION

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HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH PEREDA'S PLAN EX ANTE OR EX POST. HOLDING OFF UNTIL EITHER SIDE OF AUGUST 6 WILL OBVIOUSLY PUT MORE PRESSURE ON PEREDA, BUT IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT WHAT THAT MEANS.

7. OUR LATEST SOUNDING WITH HERNAN SILES WOULD SEEM TO INDICATE THAT IT WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE TO GET A CONSENSUS OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES ON AN ELECTION DATE. SILES APPARENTLY MEANT IT WHEN HE CALLED FOR ELECTIONS WITHIN SIX MONTHS. THE CAMPESINO VIOLENCE IN THE YUNGAS HAS AT THE MOMENT CAUSED HIM TO HARDEN THIS POSITION. THE TWO CENTER PARTIES (PAZ AND BERNAL) CANNOT REGROUP THEMSELVES IN SIX MONTHS' TIME; THEY WILL WANT A YEAR OR MORE. PROBABLY THE NEXT POINT AT WHICH WE WILL KNOW MORE THAN WE NOW DO IS AFTER THE AUGUST 1 MEETING OF MILITARY COMMANDERS.
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